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To land.whitepaper@dse.vic.gov.au
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Subject Land & Biodiversity White Paper

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To the Project Director, Land and Biodiversity White Paper,

Thank you for this opportunity, I am the president of Ross Creek Landcare, a member of the Enfield Forest Alliance and Community Building Initiative committees; and a mother, concerned for the future of all coming generations. I have been passionate about native biodiversity for many years, and am increasingly alarmed at the growing numbers of threatened and endangered species and predicted extinctions with looming climate change. Despite the recent public awareness of environmental issues, there remains a frustrating lack of general community knowledge, insight and mechanisms to reverse the decline in biodiversity.

Mechanisms and enforceable regulations need to be implemented to protect existing biodiversity, rather than trying to replace it later. I believe the following issues need to be addressed before we lose too much of our precious natural heritage.

□ Protection regulations of the old trees & trees with hollows in all shires/councils: surveys to map such trees on private and public land and strategies quickly put in place to ensure their survival. Public education on their habitat value and fully funded fencing projects, plus better roadside management regulations would help stop the current wide-spread incremental loss of these valuable old trees. Some form of financial incentive would encourage compliance with regulations [which need to be enforced].

□ Habitat corridors fully protected from degradation and destruction: surveys to identify vital corridors, necessary legislation implemented to prevent any loss of habitat value; funding and incentives to restore and protect these areas. Legislation would be necessary to stop understorey destruction from grazing and subdivision of "lifestyle" blocks which creates ongoing incremental clearing. Payment or rate rebates should go to people who restore and maintain viable habitat areas throughout the state. Current exemptions for existing block owners that presently allow clearing need to be tightened; council laws are generally very weak in this area. Landscape scale thinking and projects are required for biodiversity health.

□ Public land requires increased management for better biodiversity outcomes. This means greater financial support to increase the necessary staff and resources within organisations, such as Parks Victoria and D.S.E/D.P.I. More staff presence is needed to deal with weed and pest management, illegal fire wood removal, dirt bike and 4WD damage off suitable tracks, illegal hunting and releasing of pest animals for hunting.

□ Biodiversity planning needs to be incorporated into all forest practices; although forestry is dealt with in another policy process, biodiversity has to be the over riding factor for the long- term sustainability of the industry and the state. There should not be exemptions for big business or political gain, the only way to halt biodiversity decline is for all of society to contribute. All old growth logging needs to stop immediately to prevent biodiversity atrophy; too much has been lost already, with imminent extinctions of several species. Forestry plantations should have minimum standards for biodiversity actions applied such as biodiverse untouched areas interspersed amongst monoculture plantations. This would allow refuges for animals that use the plantations, this would also be a

beneficial balancing mechanism such as natural pest control. Forestry \ plantation enterprises should be responsible for eradication of escaped forestry plants and weeds from their land-holdings.

□ High biodiversity standards applied to all offset and carbon credit schemes. Ensure offsets are only applied as an absolute last option, not as a means of continuing bad environmental practices. Offset and carbon credit revegetation projects need to ensure they are to provide future viable native habitat that is managed appropriately after the planting process. Slick schemes that aim to cash in on the carbon trading market, without any real environmental or biodiversity benefits, should not be able to get established due to strict regulatory standards.

□ A large shift in current urban planning is needed to incorporate biodiversity considerations. Mandatory planning legislation needs to include large tracts of open space for recreation and native flora and fauna connected corridors, amongst more compact living zones of environmental oriented housing. Maximum water and power saving need to be mandatory. Incentives could be created for existing urban dwellers to encourage native biodiversity within gardens and even existing parks. Larger financial incentives are needed for existing homes to have an environmental retrofit. The current new housing standards are only a small step towards making an effective difference to our declining natural environment.

□ Reducing vegetation for fire safety need to have biodiversity considerations rigorously applied. Current mandatory clearing for a building permit in a wild fire zone appears to be ambiguous and excessively destructive.

□ Controlled burning regimes should have high biodiversity values, and follow the practices of local indigenous people, where possible. Whilst fires threaten human lives, in the long run, the consequences of lost biodiversity also threaten all human life.

□ All Ecological vegetation classes need protection status. While some are more prevalent than others are, too much native vegetation has already been lost, large tracts of habitat are the only sure way to ensure species viability. A pro-active approach is necessary, to only protect flora and fauna when it becomes threatened is re-active.

□ Large increase in weed and pest management on private and public lands and roadsides. Roadside management needs to encourage native vegetation; many current practices encourage and spread weeds. More funding needs to be allocated for this and other land management problems; adequate to employ sufficient staff to reduce the abundance of all weeds and pests, not just a few target species. Genetically modified crops have the potential to cross-pollinate with weed species and create highly resistant weeds; with climate warming predicted to increase weed infestations, it would seem to be extremely unwise to introduce additional problems.

□ Farming practices have improved greatly, particularly with Landcare input, but some landholders persist with destructive land and waterway practices. Soil and vegetation loss, degradation by salinity and erosion, and waterway damage has to become illegal; it affects all ecosystems and ultimately, all of society. There has been sufficient time to change from destructive practices.

□ All waterways require legal protection; many waterways, [major and minor], are degraded by unregulated misuse. Unlimited construction of dams, particularly where there are small land holdings, is yet another impact on biodiversity. Some land developers still turn biodiverse, functioning small waterways into dug out drains.

□ Marine biodiversity is affected by land and sea practices and deserves huge consideration. Channel deepening is too risky as not all problems could ever be foreseen and much too hard to rectify or limit in a marine environment. Desalination plants could only diminish biodiversity, and would therefore be contrary to the aims of the Biodiversity White Paper.

□ Indigenous knowledge and aspirations are vitally important in preserving our native biodiversity; they were the original Landcarers.

□ The Landcare movement needs to retain it's current involvement with protection and enhancement of biodiversity. Landcare funded revegetation projects require protection by law or they can be destroyed and not have the intended biodiversity outcomes. Landcare volunteers cannot be expected

to do the bulk of work required to really reverse the current decline of biodiversity; a large staff increase in all related departments is needed to back up the work of many overburdened volunteers.

Biodiversity considerations with set minimum standards (that are not too minimum) must be mandatory in every aspect of planning throughout the country. Reducing the "heat island" effect in cities and towns, reducing power and water use etc. also affect biodiversity: hopefully global warming can be minimised to prevent mass extinctions, which would, in turn, worsen climate change. I cannot see another means, other than legislation, to protect and enhance our native biodiversity. Public education, incentive schemes and a massive injection of funding are necessary also but cannot achieve the desired outcomes without laws to support them. Healthy biodiversity is too important to be left to goodwill and good luck; we can't save the planet without it.

I hope this can make a contribution to the White Paper.

Yours

faithfully,

Elizabeth L.

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